

The ancient speculations "of the religious order include indeed some splendid ideas relating to a Supreme Being; but these ideas impart no attraction to that immensity of inane and fantastic follies from the chaos of which *they* stand out, as of nobler essence and origin. For the most part they probably were traditionary remains of divine communications to man in the earliest ages. A few of them were, possibly, the utmost efforts of human intellect, at some happy moments excelling itself. But in whatever proportions they be referred to the one origin or the other, they stand so distinguished from the accumulated multifarious vanities of pagan speculation on the subject of Deity, that they throw contempt on those speculations. They throw contempt on the greatest part of the theological dogmas and fancies of even the very philosophers who would cite and applaud them. They rather direct our contemplation and affection toward a religion divinely revealed, than obtain any degree of favour for those notions of the Divinity, which sprang and indefinitely multiplied from a melancholy combination of ignorance and depraved imagination. As to the apparent analogy between certain particulars in the pagan religions, and some of the most specific articles of Christianity, those notions are presented in such fantastic, and varying, and often monstrous shapes, that they can be of no prejudice to the Christian faith, either by pre-occupying in our minds the place of the Christian doctrines, or by indisposing us to admit them, or by perverting our conception of them.

As to the ancient metaphysical speculation, whatever may be the tendency of metaphysical study in general, or of the particular systems of modern philosophers, as affecting the cordial and simple admission of Christian doctrines, the ancient metaphysics may certainly be pronounced inoperative and harmless. If it were possible to analyze the mass of what may be termed our *effective* literature, so as to ascertain what elements and interfusions in it have been of influential power, and in what respective proportions, in forming our habits of thinking and feeling, it is probable that a very small share would be found derived from the ideal theories of the old philosophers. It is probable also, that in future not one of a thousand men, cultivated in a respectable degree, will ever take the trouble of a resolute and